

Question and Answer Sheet

- 1. Regarding the timing of the project and the adjoining WSDOT project: What opportunities will this project and its stakeholders have to impact the WSDOT project?**

This project is not intended to provide opportunity for stakeholders to impact the WSDOT project. The public process and stakeholder committee that WDFW and Ducks Unlimited are organizing for the Leque Island Alternatives Analysis and Design Project is independent of the WSDOT highway project.

- 2. As a salmon recovery project, how many fish will be produced as a result of the project?**

We do not yet have predictions for salmon production as a result of different design scenarios at Leque Island. Benefits to fish are dependent on the design, and will be assessed as part of the alternatives analysis phase of the project. Once design alternatives are drafted, the alternatives analysis phase will follow to assess benefits and drawbacks to each design alternative. Predicted impacts to fish will be a metric used to select the preferred alternative design.

- 3. Give an example of other restoration projects that successfully restored fish populations.**

It will take up to 20 years to fully understand how estuary restorations affect declining salmon populations. Salmon populations respond to many environmental influences and undergo natural fluctuations in their numbers, so it will take time to evaluate the influence of our restoration projects. So far we can say that formerly diked areas that have been returned to tidal functions are indeed well used by juveniles during critical rearing stages of development, in systems where juvenile survival is limiting population size. The Nisqually and Skagit have such successful projects. There is no evidence that these areas are merely attracting fish that would have reared somewhere else; we expect the rearing that goes on there is indeed additional rearing that must be increasing the number of juvenile salmon that head out to sea.

- 4. What can local citizens do to help the project?**

Local citizens can attend public meetings throughout the project and give input on design alternatives through a survey that will be distributed at the next public meeting, which we anticipate will be in March of 2014. In addition to providing input that will assist WDFW in determining the preferred alternative design, there will likely be opportunity to assist WDFW and project partners in monitoring bird use on south Leque Island. When this monitoring proposal is further developed, we may seek volunteers for assistance.

- 5. Will this project be addressed by the WDFW Commission in Olympia? Will there be opportunity for public presentation before the commission?**

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A project of this scale and nature is typically not elevated to or addressed by the WDFW Commission.

6. Is the importance of estuarine habitat for migrating shorebirds being taken into consideration?

Yes, predicted impacts to shorebirds will be taken into account in the alternatives analysis phase of the project. Additionally, we intend to draft and implement a monitoring plan that will document shorebird use on South Leque Island over time.

7. Can you provide more information on how the final decision between alternatives will be made? Who makes the decision? Based on what criteria?

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife District Team, which consists of the Area Habitat Biologist, Skagit Wildlife Area Manager, District Fish Biologist, District Wildlife Biologist, Lands Agent, and Detachment 12 Enforcement, will make a recommendation on the preferred alternative to the Region 4 program managers. The District Team will consider input received through public surveys, co-managers, and the Stakeholder Committee process to make the recommendation. The Region 4 program managers will consider input received through public surveys, co-managers, and the Stakeholder Committee process to approve or modify the recommendation of the District Team. The Region 4 Regional Director will then advance the Region 4 recommendation to the WDFW Executive Management Team in Olympia for final approval or modification. Specific metrics and criteria used to make the decision will be developed in the alternatives analysis process and will be a discussion topic for the project Stakeholder Committee.

8. Will a second preferred alternative be identified in the event that the first fails to secure funding?

Yes, the alternatives will be ranked in order of preference. If the preferred alternative is unable to be implemented, WDFW will consider advancing the second preferred alternative.

9. How will the new park play into this?

I assume the “new park” referenced is the property across West Pass that the City of Stanwood is working to acquire. WDFW and the City of Stanwood have, and will continue, to coordinate throughout the Leque Island Alternatives and Design Project to assure compatibility between both projects.

10. Will there be a pheasant release site?

The capability for the property to accommodate pheasant hunting will be evaluated when design alternatives are analyzed. The alternatives analysis phase of the project is anticipated to begin in Spring of 2014, after the design alternatives are drafted.

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11. Is funding available today to maintain all current dikes?

Skagit Wildlife Area staff monitors the condition of the dikes and have limited funding to perform basic dike maintenance such as mowing and vegetation control. The current condition of the dikes also limits the amount of mowing work that can be done safely. More extensive dike maintenance that involves soil and rock work is considered a capital project and requires special project funding. There is not capital project funding for Skagit Wildlife Area dike maintenance in this FY 13-15 biennium.

12. Will the availability of salmon habitat restoration funding influence your choice of options?

The likelihood of the design to be successfully implemented will be taken into account in selection of the preferred alternative design. Availability of funding for implementation is a factor to determine this likelihood. A variety of fund sources will be considered to determine availability of funding.

13. Will any of the proposals address the impact of the failed dikes that are threatening the farmland on Camano just north of HWY 532?

No, the focus of this project is the portion of Leque Island that is South of HWY 532.

14. How much money do you have for the design? What is the source?

Ducks Unlimited has been awarded grants to cover costs associated with the project. The current budget for the project is \$811,188. This amount is anticipated to cover costs incurred throughout the design, modeling, alternatives analysis, outreach, and permitting phases of the project. This work is funded by a combination of grants awarded by the Estuary and Salmon Restoration Program (ESRP), NOAA, and the Lower Stillaguamish Fish, Farm, and Flood Management Project that is administered by Washington Department of Ecology. Construction funding for the preferred alternative design will be sought after selection of the preferred alternative.

15. There is no more handicapped pheasant hunting since headquarters was destroyed and Leque dikes were let go. What is the future?

WDFW is actively searching for additional property to provide pheasant hunting opportunity, to replace the opportunity displaced at Wiley Slough (Headquarters) by the estuary restoration project. For additional information about this effort, please contact Russell Link (425) 775-1311 ext. 110 or Russell.link@dfw.wa.gov.

16. Will WDFW be accepting letters or emailed comments with ideas, suggestions, concerns at this stage (ie before alternatives are developed)? That is, will there be any form of scoping?

WDFW is trying to focus comments and feedback through the Stakeholder Committee process and surveys that will be distributed at public meetings. The Stakeholder Committee will meet

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prior to development of alternatives to identify concerns and give ideas and suggestions. You are, however, always welcome to contact me at Loren.Brokaw@dfw.wa.gov or (425)775-1311 ext. 105.

- 17. Hwy 532 crossing the property (Leque Island) will be raised a number of feet and possibly widened in the near future. What impact will this construction have on this project?**

WDFW is coordinating with Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) throughout the planning process of the highway project. The design and timing of construction of the highway project will need to be considered throughout the Leque Island Alternatives Analysis and Design project. It is likely that the WSDOT highway project will be constructed before potential construction begins on the preferred alternative design for South Leque Island.

- 18. Global warming over the next 20-30 years may have an impact which may cause tidal flows to change due to the increase flow of water as well as depth of the present channel. What if any damage caused by increased flows of water will have on the dike system presently planned for this project?**

If new dikes are included in the preferred alternative design, those dikes will be built to design standards that are predicted to withstand impacts caused by climate change. Design standards for construction of new dikes typically account for the most extreme conditions predicted for the next 100 years.

- 19. What plans have been made for the disabled/aging population for access such as walking paths, parking lots, viewing areas and restrooms?**

No design alternatives have been developed for the project yet. Access details will be considered after design alternatives have been drafted, and will be discussed in future public and Stakeholder Committee meetings.

- 20. Why the short response time for these questionnaires given the poor turnout at the meeting?**

The survey period was open for 16 days following the meeting, and was advertised to the project email group following the meeting. This amount of time was intended to be sufficient to complete the survey. To be added to the project email group, please contact Loren.Brokaw@dfw.wa.gov.

- 21. Has the Dept. considered the possibility of "in the long term" what salt water may have after time on Camano's north end aquifer?**

A water quality study was completed by Pacific Groundwater Group and submitted to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to assess potential impacts to drinking water on North Camano Island. The EPA issued a letter of determination on July 31, 2013 that states, "The EPA has determined that the Leque Project does not create a significant hazard to public health by contaminating the Camano Island sole source aquifer." More information about the study and

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EPA's determination is at:

http://yosemite.epa.gov/r10/water.nsf/Sole+Source+Aquifers/camano_island

- 22. Is the Dept. also going work on the side of the hunter and what unique duck and pheasant opportunity that Leque provides even though most of the folks at the meeting were non-hunters?**

WDFW will use a variety of factors, including opportunity for hunting and other recreational uses, to assist in selecting the preferred alternative design. WDFW will collect input through the Stakeholder Committee and public surveys.

- 23. Is the Dept. aware of the endless benefits to keeping Leque a pheasant release site since it is so hard to find other suitable sites for this very popular recreation?**

WDFW is aware that Leque Island is a valued by pheasant hunters as a pheasant release site.

- 24. Is the Dept. willing to manage Leque correctly (which is very possible with a few rule changes) so that all users can share what this piece of property has to offer if dikes are repaired and left whole?**

WDFW's intent is to use the alternatives analysis process through this project to determine the preferred design for Leque Island. There are diverse interests that value Leque Island for a variety of reasons, so there are many factors that will need to be considered to determine the preferred alternative design.

- 25. Will the upland portion of Leque Island be restored to agricultural use?**

Design alternatives have not yet been drafted for Leque Island. More information about uses that will be compatible with alternative designs will be available after drafts are completed. This information will be discussed and presented in future Stakeholder Committee and public meetings.

- 26. If the area is flooded, will it still be open to the public? For hunting, fishing, kayaking etc.?**

Regardless of the preferred alternative design, WDFW intends to keep the area open to the public. The only anticipated restrictions to access would be related to public safety or seasonal closures to protect habitat and wildlife from disturbance.

- 27. Are there plans to open another pheasant release area if this one is taken away? It seems that costs have doubled in the last 2-3 years but there are less areas to hunt.**

WDFW is actively searching for additional property to provide pheasant hunting opportunity. WDFW acknowledges that pheasant hunting opportunity was displaced at Wiley Slough (Headquarters) by the estuary restoration project. For additional information about this effort, please contact Russell Link (425) 775-1311 ext. 110 or Russell.link@dfw.wa.gov.

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28. Would removing the dikes be the best plan if the goal is to restore salmon habitat?

Yes, and benefit to salmon habitat will be a factor that is used to assist WDFW with selection of the preferred alternative design; it will be estimated for each alternative design that is drafted. The Stillaguamish Watershed Chinook Recovery Plan identifies restoration of estuary conditions and blind tidal channel habitat on Leque Island as the top priority estuary/nearshore restoration project in the Stillaguamish watershed.